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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [SY](#) [KN](#) [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#)
SUBJECT: IAEA/SYRIA/BOARD OF GOVERNORS: CONCERN OVER NEW
URANIUM FINDINGS, HEIGHTENED ATTACKS ON ISRAEL, ISRAEL
VERSUS DG FIREWORKS

REF: UNVIE 00266

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION GEOFFREY PYATT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

Summary and Comment

¶1. (C) Summary: The June Board debate on Syria unfolded along largely familiar lines with many Board members calling on Damascus to cooperate with the Agency's requests, while NAM and Arab delegations continued to focus on Israel's misdeeds, rather than the need for Syrian cooperation. The debate did little to advance the issue, but was punctuated by a fiery exchange between Israel and Director General ElBaradei that detracted from our effort to improve Board dynamics.

¶2. (SBU) The NAM welcomed Syrian adherence to legal obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) while ignoring or downplaying findings of anthropogenic (man-made) uranium. By contrast, the new uranium findings at the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) concerned many like-minded countries. The NAM/Arabs argued the MNSR findings were a matter for routine safeguards that should not be connected to the investigation to the Dair Alzour (also known as Al-Kibar) site. Russia for the first time expressed concern about the uranium findings, noted they require explanation, and called for a dispassionate investigation. Taking its cues from the NAM, Syria focused on Israel and dismissed uranium findings at the MNSR, noting that the facility is for university experiments and is fully under safeguards; for the first time, Syrian Atomic Energy Commission head Othman explicitly denied Syrian cooperation with the DPRK in the nuclear field. Iran also spoke in Syria's defense under Rule 50, and again requested a General Conference agenda item on the destruction of the Dair Alzour facility (Note: A formal written request is required to submit an agenda item, so Iran's call alone has no practical effect. End Note.) In all, 21 Statements were delivered under the Syria Verification Agenda Item, including on behalf of the European Union and the Non Aligned Movement (read by Egypt instead of current NAM Chair Cuba), representing 31 of 35 Board members. The only Board members not to speak on Syria were Brazil, China, Mexico, and Uruguay. Six states spoke under Rule 50, the Republic of Korea, Israel, Libya, Indonesia, Iran, and Syria. The Board remains deeply polarized on the Syrian case, even more so than on Iran. For example, Saudi Arabia's public silence on the Iran agenda item is in stark contrast to its defense of Syria. Mexico's potent statement on Iran also offers contrasts with its

silence on Syria.

¶3. (SBU) The Director General's appeal, at the end of the Iran agenda item (septel), for transparency and cooperation beyond the narrow purview of legal authorities, fell on deaf NAM and Syrian ears. ElBaradei had called for implementation of the Additional Protocol (AP) and directly admonished Syria by saying that &if you want to prove allegations are not accurate, the best thing to do is to be transparent.8 This helpful intervention was subsequently overshadowed when Israel took the floor under the Syrian item to levy an impassioned admonition to both Syria and the Director General, whom it openly accused of political bias. Israel also called upon the DG to take measures the IAEA had &refrained8 from taking, a thinly veiled reference to a Special Inspection. The DG, at the conclusion of the Syria agenda item, excoriated Israel in turn for violating international law and &preaching8 at the IAEA while insulting the investigative process with its unresponsiveness and, noting that he had not shared certain correspondence received from Israel because he wanted to spare the Board such &gutter8 talk.

¶4. (C) Comment: Israel's statement, which Israeli Ambassador Michaeli delivered under instructions (Michaeli shared with Mission his personal reservations about the tack Israel was taking) largely backfired and distracted from the focus on Syria's obligations and from the direct approach the DG had taken earlier to telling Iran it needed to start cooperating with the IAEA. Even friendly Board members, while not endorsing ElBaradei's views, believed the DG's response should have been expected and that Israel should have known better. Many questioned whether we had counseled Israel against this course (which we had). Mission will

monitor closely whether this puerile exchange has any negative impact on the scope and pace at which ElBaradei is willing to let his staff press the investigation in Syria, specifically in regard to any possible consideration of the special inspection option. End Summary and Comment.

Syria Should Cooperate

¶5. (SBU) The majority of Board members called for Syria to cooperate with the Agency as requested by the Director General in his latest report on implementation of Safeguards in Syria (GOV/2009/36, ref A). Among those focusing on Syrian cooperation were the EU, Canada, Russia (Syria should show cooperativeness), Australia, Turkey, New Zealand, Switzerland (Syria should cooperate totally with the IAEA), Japan, Argentina, India (called on &all concerned8 parties to cooperate), and Ghana. Under Rule 50, the Republic of Korea requested Syria's full cooperation and Indonesia said the Agency needs cooperation from all parties concerned. The EU, Turkey, Argentina, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, ROK also joined the U.S. in requesting Syria provide the additional information, documentation, and access to Dair Alzour, other sites, and the debris as requested by the Agency. The like-minded continued to highlight concerns. The EU expressed deep concern that the information provided by Syria does not adequately support its assertions about the nature of the Dair Alzour site and does not allow the Agency to determine the nature of the facility and complete its assessment. Canada remained deeply concerned about revelations of undeclared nuclear activities in Syria and connections with DPRK, and recalled the Agency's assessment that the features of the building were not inconsistent with a nuclear reactor. Australia argued that until Syria cooperates, the Board cannot be sure of the nature of its nuclear program. New Zealand regretted that the Agency can report no progress in the investigation since the previous meeting of the Board. Japan regretted Syria's partial responses to the Agency. ROK also expressed concern about the inadequate information provided by Syria. The EU, Australia, and Japan joined us in calling on Syria to sign and implement the Additional Protocol.

16. (SBU) By contrast, NAM and Arab Board members welcomed ongoing Syrian cooperation to date and argued that cooperation should not exceed legal obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA). The NAM statement read by Egypt rather than NAM Chair Cuba made this point while noting that information provided by Syria was still being assessed. South Africa was also among those commending and encouraging continued cooperation by Syria. Malaysia called for Syria to continue to show flexibility and transparency in cooperating with the Agency, but noted that Syria is only obliged to comply within its comprehensive safeguards agreement, and all other measures are purely voluntary. Egypt, in its national capacity, cautioned that the lines are becoming blurred between what is a legal obligation and what goes beyond, and that this line should be made clear. Cuba rejected calls on Syria to go beyond its obligations, saying it sets a bad precedent. Algeria and then Libya under Rule 50 encouraged Syria to cooperate with the Agency pursuant to its CSA obligations. Libya also commended Syria for its cooperation to date. Among the NAM, Ghana's national statement was notable in encouraging Syrian cooperation and citing partial and unresponsive answers to the IAEA's queries.

Uranium Findings at Two Syrian Sites

17. (SBU) Other Board members, largely from among the like-minded, continued to seek clarification from Syria on the origin of the anthropogenic uranium found at Dair Alzour and expressed concern over new findings of anthropogenic uranium at the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) facility in Damascus. The EU called into question the completeness and correctness of Syria's declaration under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) given the findings of uranium of a type not in Syria's declared inventory of nuclear material. The EU and Canada recalled the Agency's assessment that there was a low probability that the uranium particles were introduced by the missiles

used to destroy the building. Canada noted that the findings of uranium at both sites further reinforce the immediate and essential need for Syria to cooperate fully and with transparency. Japan expressed disappointment that little progress had been made since March with respect to the uranium findings at Dair Alzour. In addition to the usual like-minded concerns, Turkey said the uranium findings at the MNSR need to be better understood within the totality of the dossier. Argentina sought a precise comprehension with regards to the presence of uranium particles at the Dair Alzour site. The ROK also said the findings need to be understood.

18. (SBU) NAM countries largely downplayed the uranium findings at Dair Alzour and the MNSR, either by ignoring the issue in their statements or by disassociating the MNSR samples from the Dair Alzour investigation. Egypt, on behalf of the NAM, argued that the MNSR samples were part of routine safeguards implementation and not connected to the alleged nuclear reactor at Dair Alzour. Cuba maintained that there was an exaggerated connotation to the uranium particles, which should be clarified as part of the Agency's routine process, and dismissed speculation connecting uranium findings at Dair Alzour and the MNSR as groundless. Fellow NAM troika member Malaysia only mentioned the uranium particles in the context of its call on Israel to cooperate with the Agency. Alone among the NAM, Saudi Arabia obliquely referred to the uranium samples by noting that the Agency will continue to deal with samples and information so the Syria issue could be brought to a conclusion.

Russian Statement

¶9. (SBU) Russia delivered a more balanced statement than in previous Boards that for the first time expressed concern that the uranium findings still require an explanation and supported a dispassionate investigation by the IAEA. However, Russia was also careful to stipulate that the finding of uranium particles is not in itself proof that the destroyed facility had a nuclear purpose. Russia both supported the Director General's appeal for Syria to show cooperativeness and noted the DG's request to Israel to share with the Agency the information that led to the use of force against the Syrian facility &without giving the Agency an opportunity to verify the facility before it was destroyed.⁸ Russia also sought an explanation of the serious delay (i.e. by the U.S.) in informing the IAEA after the fact. (Comment: Although Russia continues to express reservations about the Syrian dossier, it seems increasingly swayed by the factual evidence. End Comment.) China, which has spoken on Syria at the last two Boards, did not deliver an intervention.

NAM/Arabs Blame Israel

¶10. (SBU) Further illustrating the polarized environment on this issue in the Board, NAM/Arab interventions focused almost entirely on Israel's aggression⁸ against Syria (sic) while giving credence to Syria's explanation that the destroyed facility was a military installation. The NAM statement, as well as individual NAM members (Malaysia, Egypt, Ecuador, Cuba, and Algeria, as well as Libya, Indonesia, Iran, and Syria under Rule 50) decried Israel's unilateral use of force as a flagrant violation of the UN Charter. All the Arab delegations and several NAM complained of double standards with respect to Israel. Malaysia further observed that no other Member State besides the NAM has condemned Israel, which Cuba attributed to political motivations on the part of those turning a deaf ear to Israeli aggression.⁸ Cuba added that the IAEA was the victim⁸ as the destruction of the facility prevented verification. Iran, under Rule 50, again proposed as it did in March, adding to the 2009 General Conference agenda an item on Consequences of Israel's military attacks on Member States to Global Security.⁸ (Note: Putting this on the IAEA GC agenda would be an admission that the site was indeed nuclear-related. In any case, despite Iran's bluster, the Secretariat has not received a written request, required for an agenda item. End Note.) In addition to Middle East NPT issues, Algeria also referenced progress on broader disarmament with respect to the CD, CTBT and FMCT in its

statement.

¶11. (SBU) Several NAM also focused on information sharing. Egypt further observed that the manner in which the information was brought to the IAEA is not acceptable and that it reflects a deep lack of confidence of the IAEA by some member states.⁸ South Africa did not focus on Israel's destruction of the facility but supported the DG's call for Israeli cooperation as well as for expeditious sharing of information with the Agency. Ghana and India associated themselves with the NAM statement, but did not in a national capacity repeat the criticism of Israel. India hoped &all⁸ concerned would respond to the DG's request.

Report Not Released

¶12. (SBU) The Syria report was not released due to lack of consensus. Canada's request that the report be made public, was seconded by the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. Egypt objected to the release the Syria report, adding that calls to do so were politically motivated and in no way furthered the Agency's technical mandate. Cuba, India, and Saudi Arabia also spoke against the release of the report. Iraq

noted that nothing should be published unless authorized exclusively the Board. (Note: Later in the Board meeting (septel) the NAM put forward a position that the general policy of de-restricting Board documents should be predicated on the consent of the state concerned, i.e. giving states such as Syria effective veto power over releasing reports.)

¶13. (SBU) The EU, New Zealand, Japan, and South Africa looked forward to the DG,s report on Syria at the September Board.

Syria Blames Israel, Downplays Uranium Finding

¶14. (SBU) Syrian Atomic Energy Chair Ibrahim Othman delivered the Syria statement as the last speaker under Rule 50. Othman began by thanking NAM states and friendly countries for their understanding and support for Syria,s position. He emphasized that Syria has consistently cooperated with the Agency and is still cooperating in all areas, &particularly in the issue at hand.⁸ Othman noted that on May 12, May 17, and May 24, 2009, Syria sent written letters providing replies to all Agency questions, even though the Director General,s report describes some replies as partial and repetitive. However, Syria has clarified all replies in keeping with its obligations under its CSA.

¶15. (SBU) In a Freudian slip, Othman affirmed that &Israel has attacked a Syrian nuclear facility,⁸ and added that Syria exercised restraint in order to avoid escalation in one of the most volatile regions in the world. Othman complained that instead of appreciating Syria, the IAEA asked Syria to disclose information Syria did not have. He noted that the Agency inspectors have visually looked at facility at Dair Alzour, and verified it is a military facility, yet there are still questions on the nature of the facility. Othman,s repeated that the facility was military and not related to nuclear activity. (Comment: Othman,s response misrepresented the fact that the Agency is seeking the nature of the facility that was destroyed, not the current facility. End Comment.)

¶16. (SBU) Othman stressed that Syria is in a state of war with Israel, calling Israel an aggressor and occupier of its territory. He asked &How then are we asked to give info on our military installations?⁸ &Why does the international community not require Israel to produce a list of bombs it possesses?⁸ &Why did Israel not allow environmental sampling of warheads where they are stored to ensure there is no uranium there?⁸ He focused on Israel,s non-NPT status and called on Board members to condemn Israel,s actions before questioning Syria on issues related to national security. Othman also noted Israel,s &surprising⁸ request to delete sentences referring to its destruction of the Dair Alzour facility in various reports.

¶17. (SBU) Othman continued to dismiss IAEA findings of uranium particles. He noted that the reporting of uranium found not being of a type included in Syria,s declared inventory of nuclear material &is grossly unfair and

unjust⁸ towards Syria. He explained that the Agency found just a few natural uranium particles that were chemically processed, and queried whether any state had ever been asked to include in its inventory contaminated material? Analyses of environmental samples do not clarify the uranium came from a reactor, he noted adding that if the reactor was only a few months away from becoming operational then uranium particles should be everywhere. Othman further asked if a reactor of &that kind⁸ does not need a whole list of material and equipment, and not just a water pump? He claimed that Syria has answered all queries and inspectors have observed the pump feeding, as well as the location and the final destination of the water in the nearby villages. Despite this, the IAEA still asked for more clarifications.

¶18. (SBU) Othman objected to the DG report,s inclusion of

the natural uranium finding in the hot cells at the MNSR facility and said the linkage to Dair Alzour is unjustified. He noted that hot cells are close to the neutron source (MNSR), which has been under the control and inspection of the IAEA; that the capacity of the MNSR is less than 30 kilowatts-thermal, and that the neutron flow is extremely limited. He added that the core is also sealed which means Syria cannot handle its fuel, and cannot carry out any irradiation experiments in that core to obtain a high neutron flow.⁸ He further specified that the hot cells are made of lead and are 10 cm thick, and use tongs rather than manipulators. Othman noted that all Syria can do in this reactor is a series of basic experiments for university students in nuclear activation analysis (NAA). Syria is utilizing this reactor well⁸ in such analysis, and that the reference materials, like most reference materials, contain uranium. He explained that concentrations were higher⁸ in 2008 than in previous years because Syria seldom used the hot cells until recently when a number of graduate students carried out NAA at the facility. Othman said the Agency had been notified of this work. Othman noted that the Agency's periodic inspection (the annual Physical Inventory Verification) will soon take place. Syria will extend the Agency all the cooperation needed.

¶19. (SBU) Othman addressed the issue of North Korea for the first time at a Board meeting, noting that it was unacceptable to question linkages to the DPRK in allegations about Dair Alzour. Syria is an independent country and it establishes its relations according to its national interests that should not be questioned. Othman stressed that there are no activities by any Korean company in Syria in the nuclear field and that Syria has neither requested nor established any cooperation with any Korean company in the regard. Also, Othman noted there is no scientific cooperation between Syrian and DPRK scientists.

¶20. (SBU) Othman concluded that Syria has provided all information available and stressed that it will continue to cooperate with the Agency to close the file as soon as possible, although this would not be at the expense of Syria's national security. He closed by calling for establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East.

Israel Accuses DG of Bias on Syria

¶21. (SBU) As presaged in his short interventions under the Annual Report and SIR agenda items, Israeli Ambassador Michaeli delivered an emotional statement under the Syria agenda item objecting to references to Israel in the DG's report and directly accusing the Director General of bias. After expressing appreciation for the Secretariat's work, Israel's statement began by deploring Syrian efforts to hamper the investigation, conceal the facts and cover up clandestine activities. Israel also noted that cooperation by the DPRK was not explicitly called for in the report. Syria's friends all but admitted the Dair Alzour was a nuclear site and Israel was confident all issues would be resolved once Syria met its obligation to cooperate and shed light on the origin of the anthropogenic uranium particles. Israel then chastised the Director General to take measures the IAEA had refrained from taking⁸ to fully investigate the issues, a thinly veiled reference to a special inspection.

¶22. (SBU) As in the statements on the Annual Report and SIR,

Israel objected to references in paras 2 and 20 of the Syria report citing Israel as having destroyed the Dair Alzour facility, as - in line with the professionalism⁸ of the Secretariat and deviating from past practice, in addition to having nothing to do with the investigation. Michaeli added that Israel had responded in a timely manner and in good faith⁸ to the Secretariat's query on uranium munitions and

saw the Director General,s repeated request on this issue as &redundant.8 If the Director General wanted further information from Israel, the statement questioned why he had refused to meet with Israeli officials (representatives of the Atomic Energy Commission) and called on the DG to &refrain from political bias8 and publically &lashing8 Israel.

¶23. (SBU) Israel,s public recrimination of the Director General, which we had had counseled against, provoked an equally acerbic response from ElBaradei. Speaking at the conclusion of the Syria agenda item, the DG regretted the &distorted8 remarks from Israel and accused Israel of violating international law as it had done in the 1981 attack on the Osirak reactor, which had been condemned by the UN Security Council. He took non-NPT member Israel to task for &preaching at8 the IAEA for not using all its tools, asking &Who are you to tell us what to do?8 ElBaradei blamed Israel for preventing the IAEA investigation in the first place and pledged to continue to refer to Israel,s bombing of the facility unless it could be attributed to &an act of God.8 He characterized Israel,s one line response to the IAEA,s first letter on uranium munitions as an &insult to the investigative process8 and further promised to continue asking about the types of armaments used in the attack.

¶24. (C) On meeting with Israeli officials, ElBaradei affirmed that he would meet with Ambassador Michaeli any time but left it to his technical people to meet with their technical counterparts. ElBaradei concluded by noting that Israel,s technical and political people had sent him &cheap8 letters that he threw in the waste basket rather than share with the Board, as he would not engage in a &gutter8 debate. He also would not dignify the accusation of bias with a response. (Comment: Amb. Michaeli told MsnOff that in conversation the day before with the DG, Michaeli aired the complaint about not meeting with Israeli officials from the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission. Referring to an earlier press story, Michaeli said that ElBaradei told him he could not meet with the IAEC because one of the concerned officials had called for the DG to be "fired.")

¶25. (S//NF) Speaking privately with DCM after this exchange, ElBaradei complained that Michaeli had done nothing to preview this criticism of the DG in a 15 minute conversation the day before. Mission counseled both sides not to pour fuel on the fire, but the Israeli Mission and then the IAEA Secretariat chose to release their statements to the press, which stirred the debate and could make it harder for Israel and IAEA to work together, including in important areas such as Israel's information sharing.

Chair,s Summary

¶26. (SBU) The Board Chair,s summary (posted on the GovAtom website) recorded the usual like-minded versus NAM points of view on the Syrian dossier. For example, the summary recalls the Agency,s assessment of low probability of the uranium originating from munitions while in the next sentence noting that &some8 viewed Israeli responses as unconvincing. It includes NAM references to Israeli use of force and notes that the Director General,s remarks would be included in the summary record.

U.S. Statement on Syria

¶27. (SBU) Below is the text of the U.S. Statement on Syria as delivered:

Madame Chair,

Syria,s ongoing refusal to cooperate with the IAEA remains of serious concern to the United States and, indeed, should concern all supporters of the Agency,s safeguards

system and the international nonproliferation regime. As the Director General noted in his introductory statement, there are revived hopes for a new era of arms control. Such an era would depend on an IAEA that can demonstrably meet the verifications challenges placed before it.

We thank the Director General for his latest report and applaud the Secretariat's professionalism in pursuing the technical investigation in Syria. We hope future reports will reflect a decision by Syria to change course and provide the Agency a full accounting of its nuclear program, especially any undeclared nuclear activities.

Over one year has passed since the IAEA began investigating Syria's clandestine nuclear activities related to the destroyed reactor at Dair Alzour. Regrettably, Syria has not used this time to resolve the lingering questions about the reactor and associated facilities. Instead, it has chosen to hinder the Agency's efforts by refusing to allow inspectors the access the Agency has deemed essential to perform its verification mission; by failing to provide information and supporting documentation about the destroyed facility at Dair Alzour; by failing to address the Agency's questions about nuclear-related procurement efforts; and, of greatest concern, by taking steps to sanitize three additional suspected nuclear-related sites upon receiving the IAEA's request for access. As noted in the Director General's latest report to the Board, the Agency has requested, since May 2008, to hold substantive discussions with Syria on these issues and has even offered to share all of its satellite imagery with Syria. Unfortunately, Syria has thus far rebuffed the Agency's offer.

Due to Syria's non-cooperation, the Agency has yet to resolve the existing concerns and many unanswered questions related to the Dair Alzour facility. Instead, the Agency's list of questions is growing. We note with concern that the Director General's latest report reveals that new, additional traces of anthropogenic (or man-made) uranium particles have been detected at a second location, a reactor under IAEA safeguards, in Syria. According to the report, routine environmental samples taken at the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) in Damascus revealed the presence of man-made natural uranium inside the hot cells. As with the uranium previously detected at the Dair Alzour site, the uranium detected at the MNSR is of a type not included in Syria's declared inventory of nuclear material.⁸ Unfortunately, Syria's June 1 response to the Agency's request for an explanation was no more forthcoming than Syria's responses to other IAEA requests related to the investigation.

We call on Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency without delay to address all unresolved questions, including the presence of the undeclared man-made uranium detected at the Dair Alzour site and inside the hot cells at the MNSR. We must understand why such material) material that was not previously declared to the IAEA) was detected at two facilities in Syria, one of which was being constructed clandestinely.

Given the gravity of this issue and Syria's refusal to allow the IAEA to complete its mandated verification activities, the United States urges all Board members to join us in demanding that Syria fully cooperate with the IAEA investigation without delay by granting the IAEA access to any information, debris and sites needed to complete its investigation. In his latest report to the Board, the Director General says that in order for the Agency to complete its assessment, Syria needs to be more cooperative and transparent.⁸ Such cooperation will go a long way in providing assurance to the international community of Syria's peaceful intentions.

The existence of undisclosed nuclear facilities in Syria and Syria's refusal thus far to cooperate with the

investigation further underline the limitations on the Agency,s ability to fulfill its mission in a country with a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement but without an Additional Protocol. This kind of evasiveness led the international community to develop the Additional Protocol in order to give the inspectors the tools they need to provide us with the assurances we require that a country,s declaration is not only correct, but is also complete, and its nuclear program is therefore exclusively for peaceful purposes. We call on

Syria and all states that have not yet done so, to sign and implement the Additional Protocol.

Our goal with regard to Syria is transparency and the Board should show the way by making available to the public the Director General,s reports on the Implementation of the NPT Safeguards in the Syrian Arab Republic as the existence of undeclared nuclear activities is a matter of international concern. We again urge Syria to provide without further delay whatever access and information the Agency deems necessary to resolve the outstanding questions.

Thank you.
SCHULTE